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that pleasure, blended, it may be, with the primal joys referred to above, that the source of the decision in favor of such a life is to be found.

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THE ALTRUISTIC IMPULSE IN MAN AND ANIMALS.

It often happens that the mind, imbued with and dominated by a familiar theory, sees in nature things that do not exist. The projected reflection of dominant ideas assumes the aspect of real existence. And while man has the penetrating vision and shows the interest of a lover of nature for these products of his mind, which can properly be called nothing more than hallucinations, he does not even perceive the real facts which seem to contradict his dogmas, or, if he observes them, he gives them a minimum importance, and, by a process of transformation, psychologically explicable, he harmonizes them with the aspiration of his soul, he sees them as interpreted by his prejudices. Thus he sees everywhere only proofs of his own thesis, where an impartial mind can perceive only things which are indifferent if not contrary to his theory. In this case, freedom of mind disappears. The captive of his own thoughts, man seems condemned to contemplate himself eternally in the outward projection of his inner world, which he imposes upon everything and which he finds always between his mind and objective reality.

We have in Don Quixote an example both celebrated and clear, because it is magnified to the pathological stage of the phenomenon. But who can determine the point at which, upon a mistaken path, the nature of the healthy man is clearly separated from that of the sick man? The difference is one of degree and the ascent is by imperceptible gradations. When we study a phenomenon of mental peculiarity in its clearly marked form, we are able to understand more easily what

occurs on a small scale in its lower stages of development. Such methods have, in the sciences of mind, almost the same value as apparatus of increasing accuracy has for the boasted analyses of the sciences of matter.

The pathological fact of illusion, encountered so often in the case of the good knight of La Manca, is found also on a small scale among those who assert that *all* our acts and undertakings are guided by egoism. The writer who, thanks to his easy and clever style, has succeeded best in spreading this idea, is Larochevoucauld. The paradoxical French moralist can serve better as a point of departure in the discussion of this question, because he presents the theory of egoism under the clear light of exaggeration. In his maxims and aphorisms at once so interesting and so irritating, so spicy and so agreeable, he has applied his theory to the most varied situations and circumstances of life. His ready and skilful pen has contributed much to spread abroad the belief that human nature is entirely egoistic, a belief scientifically maintained by the modern philosophers, Hobbes, Locke, Helvetius, and Bentham. But it is precisely the bold and brutal frankness of his speech, presenting his thought in the stark nakedness of its consequences, that enables one easily to discover the defects of his theory. Errors disappear quickly when they find logical and sincere defenders.

According to Larochevoucauld, all the noblest impulses, all generous acts, all that is called great, magnanimous, heroic, is reduced to the motive of self-love. A certain man shows himself disinterested? It is a mask assumed by interest. The most devoted friendship is only a bargain by which our egoism aims to gain something. We rejoice in the happiness of our friend? It is because we, too, hope to profit by his happiness. In reality, in the misery of our best friends there is something which does not displease us. Generosity is nothing but the disguised ambition that scorns small interests only to seek greater ones. Liberality is nothing but the vanity of giving, and pity for others nothing more than pity for ourselves. In fine, virtue has its source in self-interest, it feeds upon vanity. When one says that he has not done a certain

thing from egoism, he lies. If one works so as not to permit the motive of self-interest to appear, he is a clever comedian. To be generous is to lay snares.

However, we believe that those moralists would be greatly perplexed who could not comprehend you and reduce your activity to the narrow and arbitrary limits of their abstract categories. But the consequences of a false interpretation of the nature of the things that constitute the domain of practical philosophy extend farther than that. When Don Quixote—to use the example already given—thrust his lance into the windmills that he mistook for giants, it was he alone who suffered the consequences of his diseased fancy. Caught by the sails of the mill and hurled far off, it was he alone who had a pain in his back. But when a person asserts and tries to demonstrate that human nature is simply and wholly egoistic, he who suffers the least from this illusion is perhaps that very person. It will not be difficult or disagreeable for many people to convince themselves of the truth of this tenet and to take refuge behind it in order at times to still the disquieting murmurs of conscience. Not that good and truly disinterested men will endeavor to change their nature so as voluntarily to harmonize it with a pretended natural necessity. But it is enough to make the theory reprehensible that it performs this great, repugnant office of consoling the wicked.

The subtleties of Laroche-foucauld's analysis, which produce almost the effect of logical sleight of hand, endeavor to make every human action of the highest nobility appear egoistic. But human nature is only the final product of a long evolution that has the nature of the lower animals as its starting-point. Man is the flower of animality. All faculties, considered as the exclusive possession of man, differ from the corresponding faculties of the animal only by their degree of development, not by their nature. There is only a quantitative not a qualitative difference between them.

If we wish to see more clearly the nature of the psychophysical mechanism, we must consider the biological forms which are relatively simple, because the functions of developed organs are more complicated. Naturally the intellect

will be able to comprehend better the complexity of higher phenomena after having studied what takes place in simpler ones. Hence, we expect to find in the higher stages of evolution the same principles and psychic properties, but more developed, that contribute also in the lower stages of evolution to the realization of a more complete adaptation to the environment, to the conservation and development of life in general. Sympathy, the sacrifice of the individual for the interests of the species, is, incontestably, one of these biological forces. But in a being so complicated as man, its nature appears susceptible of interpretations which result in its negation as sympathy. It is for that very reason that we shall seek for it in its simpler and more primitive forms. We shall see it subjected to a difficult test, the specious and false interpretation of altruistic manifestations, the examples being taken from the life of animals.

Let us cite a few carefully observed cases.

Sir John Lubbock, who has studied so well the life and habits of bees and ants, did not have precisely a good opinion of the heart of these creatures. In spite of that, he has himself observed a case which confirms the assertions of Latreille as to the sympathy of ants for their fellows when smitten by disease :

An ant without antennæ had been beaten by another of a different species. It was suffering grievously when it was found by an ant of its own species. The latter began by examining it attentively and with interest ; then it raised it and carried it to the nest. "It would have been difficult for a witness of this scene," adds Lubbock, "to refuse to recognize in it a feeling of humanity."

But Romanes cites a much more striking case, related by Belt who observed it.

"One day," says Belt, "when I was observing a little colony of ants (*Eciton humata*), I put a small stone upon one of them. As soon as the next one had perceived its condition it retraced its steps, greatly excited, and told the others. All ran to the rescue. Some bit the stone and tried to remove it, others seized the legs of the prisoner and began to pull with so much strength that I expected to see them pulled off, but no harm was done, and by dint of perseverance they ended by freeing the captive. After that I covered one with clay so as to leave

only one of its antennæ free. Its companions soon discovered it, and without loss of time, they set to work detaching the clay with their teeth, until they had delivered their friend. At another time, having noticed some ants following one another at long intervals, I placed one of them at some distance from the column, under a little clay which concealed the body but left the head visible. Several passed without suspecting anything; but at last one came which noticed it and tried to free it. Not being able to succeed, it departed rapidly, and I believed that it had abandoned its friend, but it had only gone to seek for reinforcements and reappeared in a short time with a dozen companions, all evidently talking about the situation, for they went straight to the prisoner and soon freed it. It seems to me that here there was more than instinct." *

What personal interest did the ants have in working thus? or what sort of recompense? But let us go farther. Similar cases are not found isolated in nature, and it would be very curious to see a philosopher logical enough in his conception of universal egoism to explain them by reducing them to vanity or the calculation of self-interest.

At the beginning of the chapter on the emotions of birds, Romanes says :

"In respect of emotions, we find ourselves in the case of birds in the presence of a real progress in the feelings of affection and sympathy." . . . "Even the ostrich, in spite of its stupid appearance, has enough heart to die of love, as is proved by the death of a male in the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris when he had lost his female." †

What personal interest dictated to the ostrich this conduct which brought him death? Was it perchance the ambition to preserve the reputation of a devoted husband and a loving heart, or the hope of an inheritance?

In speaking of the mental faculties of elephants, Romanes concludes: "Sympathy is a characteristic feeling of the species." Let us give at least one example of it, that of an old elephant observed by Bishop Huber. ‡

"Overcome by weakness, the animal had sunk down, and they had gone away to get another to help him to rise. Huber was greatly struck by the almost human expression of surprise, emotion, and sympathy of the second elephant when he saw the position of his companion. At first he obeyed the order and pulled strongly upon the chain that had been passed around the neck and body

* *L'Intelligence des Animaux*, vol. i. p. 44. French translation.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 32.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 145.

of the sick elephant, but at the first groan of the latter, he stopped suddenly, turned around with a savage growl and with the aid of his trunk and forefeet began to remove the chain from the neck of the old elephant."

Is this feeling of a pity so touching, a hypocritical mask, assumed from interest? Was the elephant, perchance, thinking, at the very moment in which he was acting under the powerful impulse of sympathy, that he too would one day be old and sick and that then another would aid him if he now felt sorrow for the sufferings of his fellow-elephant, and if he untied the chain that pressed his neck? Was he thinking of himself then? Did he act thus in consequence of an egoistic calculation? Was his pity for his companion in reality, as Laroche foucauld says, pity for himself?

If the most devoted friendship is a "bargain," what is the advantage to the good elephants that make of their loads a rampart and shield for their chief and friend? * Do they think of national rewards, of glory? Are they ambitious to be handed down in history or to have statues erected to them?

I have chosen the most characteristic of several cases cited by Romanes.

James Malcolm, a "very exact" observer, as Romanes calls him, says that aboard a ship on which he had embarked were two monkeys of a common Indian species. There was no bond of relationship between them. One day the younger fell into the sea. At this sight his companion began to be agitated with a feverish anxiety; he grasped with one hand the side of the ship, and with the other held out to his young comrade the end of a cord which was tied around his own body. Great was the astonishment of all those on board. It goes without saying that the little monkey would have drowned with this insufficient aid, because the cord, being too short, could not reach him. A sailor succeeded in fulfilling the moral intention of the monkey. But the success of our intentions, men or monkeys, does not depend upon our will and our strength alone. The moral character of acts and deeds is

* *L'Intelligence des Animaux*, vol. ii. p. 145.

determined by the thought and feeling that call them out, by the desired result, not by the actual one.

Here I cease citing instances. I fear even that I have cited too many. A single, very simple case, in which one could see clearly the altruistic character of the actions of animals, would have sufficed to restrict the theory of absolutely egoistic motives. The universal affirmative proposition: "Every action is interested," is annihilated by the truth of its contradictory, the negative particular proposition: "Some actions are not interested."

And, in truth, what interest could be ascribed to the individual in the cases quoted? By what calculation does the monkey let herself die of grief after the death of her little one? Is there not rather visible here a despotic anti-individualistic force? Of what use is it to the individual to die? The egoistic philosophers, racking their brains for an answer, have found one at last. That which attracts us towards and makes us desire death, is, they say, the hope of an eternal happiness, more precious than earthly happiness, because the latter is transitory. Very well! Apply this theory to the monkeys. Do they, too, believe in the immortality of the soul, in rewards and the future life? Do they also make a metaphysic? It would be difficult to prove this point, but certainly interesting, and the burden of proof rests upon the adherents of the egoistic school.

But, it will be said, the death of a being caused by sorrow at another's death, if it be not useful to the individual that perishes, is still less so to the species. Quite true. But while the cause can be found in some form of sympathy—in an inferior or even degenerate form, if you will—it cannot at all be explained by any form of self-interest.

At bottom, we have here the same impulse that urged other monkeys to brave threats and dangers in order to secure the body of one of their companions,* or that dictated the heroic resistance of the elephants that defended their chief. It is the same force that bade a little dog carry food to a hollow

* Romanes: *L'Intelligence des Animaux*, vol. ii. p. 226.

tree for an old dog, sick and abandoned. This same inner force it was that made the pelicans run up at their captive companion's cries of distress, and furnish him with fish that he might have the food he needed.* It was this same mysterious force that troubled the parrot at the sight of his sick friend, that taught him to serve her well and to give her the necessary care, and that made him act as if in despair at seeing her die, and finally stretch himself out to die soon after her death.†

This last case is particularly interesting, for it reveals clearly the different forms assumed by the sympathetic impulse, even to the pathological form when the active manifestations of the feeling become opposed to the primary end in whose service they had originally appeared as a biological function.

Is it not manifest that in these examples there is a force different from those that tend to the preservation of the individual agent? Are there not manifest here the genuine impulses of an innate tendency profoundly rooted in the organism of those beings called social? Have we not here to do with a psycho-physiological property of the individual, with the *natural* and not yet *conventional* ground of the foundation of animal societies? Sympathy, the force that urges us to act for the good of others, is the psychical side of a physiological impulse that is due to the native organization, to the very constitution of the individual. It is the emotional echo of the instinct towards the conservation of the species, that manifests itself in conjugal and filial love and in actions corresponding to these feelings.

Self-love, then, is not absolutely sovereign. Its will is found to be sometimes in conflict with that of the love for others. The tendency towards self-preservation does not always emerge victorious from this conflict. When swallows fly boldly to save their little ones from the flames of a burning house where they had made their nests, they do not think at all of themselves, of their own life. The instinct of self-preservation can only bid them to fly from the destructive heat of the fire.

* Romanes: *L'Intelligence des Animaux*, vol. ii. p. 37.

† *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 38.

Moreover, they obey this command of nature when their progeny are not in danger.

But nature is not so simple in her processes as certain theories would have us believe. She orders beings to throw themselves into the abyss, to annihilate themselves, if such sacrifice appears necessary to the realization of the supreme end,—viz., the preservation of the *many*. Her maxim seems to be: "The death of an individual is better than that of the whole people." One would say that she too cries out: "*Salus populi suprema lex esto.*" Before man comes to sanction these decrees in his conscious legislation, she has applied them unconsciously in the organic world. Man has found the content of this law of social biology in his moral nature. It is a product of an evolution ages long. He has not *invented* it by his reason.

There is then a force which the individual, in the narrowness of his personal interests, may consider as mysterious and transcendent, because it takes him out of himself, forces him to subordinate his happiness to facts of nature and even to surrender his life for it. It is this force that the metaphysicians and the poets call the "genius of the species," that genius that makes the young man forget his physical and moral life for a smile of his well-beloved, that gives the most timid creatures an extraordinary courage for the defense of their offspring, that chains the mother to the bed of her sick child and consumes her with agony, that fills the heart with pity at the sight of misery, and that creates the heroes of patriotism and of humanity.

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